



# This Land is Your Land

## Public use rules of District lands can be jewels

Six hundred million acres, or 1 out of every 3 acres of America's land, is public land. And more than 1 million acres are within the boundaries of the South Florida Water Management District. Acquiring land for water-resource dependent natural systems is no small feat, yet these District purchases reap many benefits. In fact, they might just be best described as 'two-fers,' or two-for-one

bonuses for residents and visitors in our region.

From the Kissimmee River to the southern reaches of the Everglades, the District's major restoration projects to improve the ecological integrity of our ecosystem require land. Then, as appropriate, public use of these lands is maximized with active recreation programs.



The South Florida Water Management District invites you to 'come out and play' on your public lands. Bicycle, hike, fish, camp, hunt, study nature, ride horses or bicycles...or just relax. For your free Recreation Guide, call (800) 432-2045, Ext. 6635.

### PUBLIC INPUT GUIDES RULE DEVELOPMENT

Through a rule development process, regulations are established for recreational access and use of these lands. Rule development doesn't occur in a vacuum. In fact, during May and June, five public workshops were held at various locations throughout the District's 16-county region. Workshops gave residents the chance to tell us what recreational features they would like to see on District-managed public lands.

There are five types of land addressed by the rule:

- vacant or undesignated land

- canal and levee right-of-way
- stormwater treatment areas
- impoundments
- conservation lands

Each land type has various usage restrictions. However, our efforts focus on allowed uses and how to best promote the activities offered from maps, to signage, to access points and beyond.

The rulemaking process requires authorization from the District Governing Board to forward a draft rule to the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee and Legislature for review and approval.

After formally "initiating rulemaking" and publishing the draft in the Florida Administrative Weekly, the rule will be presented to the Governing Board for adoption Jan. 11, 2006.

Public input helps guide the District in making rules about recreational uses that avoid conflict between users and user groups while protecting the land's natural and cultural features. They are jewels of rules that allow you to get out and play on public lands.

### FREE RECREATION GUIDE

The South Florida Water Management District invites you to enjoy public lands that already have established recreation programs. Hike, fish, camp, hunt, study nature, ride horses or bicycles or just relax. Get your copy of our new, colorful Recreation Guide today by calling (800) 432-2045, Ext. 6635 or email Izell Wilson at [iwilson@sfwmd.gov](mailto:iwilson@sfwmd.gov).



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for funding next year.

Research and modeling on technical criteria development continue for a number of water bodies within the region. Agreement was recently reached regarding the flow of fresh water needed for restoration of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

**Land Stewardship.** The District purchased about 7,000 additional acres during the past year for conservation and preservation purposes. The control of exotic plants and the use of prescribed burns help restore and manage the more than 300,000 acres now in our stewardship program.

Ensuring public access and recreational use on District-owned lands is a major stewardship initiative. Workshops encourage residents to help identify the appropriate features they would like to see on District-managed public lands.

"We certainly have a lot on our plate, but we are more than up to the task," said Wehle. "We have a clear vision of what needs to be done and we are committed to expediting our efforts to meet the many challenges ahead."

## CREDITS

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.

**E-mail or call us with your comments and mailing list requests:**

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*Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.*

**Q.** Who should I contact at your agency to make a request for information under Florida's Sunshine Law?

**A.** I spend most of my time in the sunshine, but I can refer you to the District's Public Records Coordinator who would be more than happy to help you with your request. Public records must be made available for inspection and copying once a verbal or written request is made. A few statutory exemptions to the Public Records Law exist, but not many apply to the South Florida Water Management District.

Make your request specific, rather than global, as there are more boxes of information on file than mosquito larvae in a swamp. You may be charged for copying records or the time spent in locating them, within limits. To make a request for documents and find out about how long it might take to retrieve them, call Donna Kramer at (561) 682-2729 or email [dkramer@sfwmd.gov](mailto:dkramer@sfwmd.gov).



### ANSWER TO FIND FREDDY

## Naples Pier overlooking the Gulf of Mexico

Naples Pier and Naples Bay attract many visitors who take pleasure in pursuing recreational activities such as fishing, sunbathing, and enjoying enchanting views.

However, the health of the bay is plagued by three major problems:

- freshwater discharges that float on top of the saltwater causing a lack of oxygen in lower regions of the bay,
- fresh water and pollution running into the bay, and
- aquatic plants and animals dying.

Naples Bay was listed on the District's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Priority Water Body list. The District and its partners are creating a SWIM plan to help save the bay. The SWIM designation provides the opportunity for funding assistance.



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